

October 5, 2005

NEWS For Immediate Release NEWS**State closes muskox hunt TX107 in Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River
in response to illegal harvest exceeding harvest quota**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has issued an emergency order closing the State Tier II subsistence hunting season for muskox in northwestern Unit 23 effective October 6, 2005 at 11:59 p.m. The harvest quota of 6 muskoxen for Hunt TX107 has been exceeded by recent illegal harvest and the hunting season is being closed to conserve this muskox population. No further hunting or harvest of this population is warranted in Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River.

Muskoxen were first introduced to the northwest portion of Game Management Unit 23 in 1970. Since then the population has grown slowly, but steadily, to an estimated 325 adults and 40 calves in July 2005. Because of its relatively modest growth rate, a bulls-only harvest quota of 3 % of the adult population has been used to guide management of the herd. Since inception of the hunt, approximately one-third of the population has inhabited Cape Krusenstern National Monument where muskox hunting is closed by federal regulations. The remaining portion of the population occurs on State-managed lands where hunting is allowed and a harvest quota of 6 bull muskox has been established for the hunt area in Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River (Hunt TX107).

Acting on an anonymous report, Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement officers confirmed that 5 muskoxen (1 bull, 3 cows and 1 calf) from this population had been shot and left near Cape Thompson during September 2005. Further examination revealed the carcass of another bull that had died during the spring or summer of 2005. Based on its proximity to a well-established 4-wheeler trail, the investigating officer suspected this muskox had been shot and left as well. Additionally, the fresh carcass of an adult cow was discovered by Department and NPS staff while conducting composition surveys during July 2005. The carcass was near a frequently used 4-wheeler trail and had a bullet entry wound in the upper paunch. Considering that at least 7 muskoxen, including 4 cows, have been illegally taken during the summer and fall of 2005, the harvest quota for Hunt TX107 has been exceeded and no further hunting or harvest is warranted. Therefore, the Tier II hunting season for muskox in this area will be closed on October 6, 2005 to conserve the population.

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